



NEWS RELEASE

32ND INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

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Wisconsin Guardsmen help build future for Iraq

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FOB FUTURE, Iraq — An instructor shouts commands in Arabic. Recruits snap into fighting stances. The instructor tests the recruits, shaking them and kicking their legs. One recruit makes a mistake, and the instructor drops him for pushups.

This training may seem like army boot camp, but these men aren't preparing to be soldiers, they are training to become Iraqi correctional officers.

At the Iraqi National Training Academy, located on Victory Base Complex near Baghdad, Iraqi instructors are training four platoons of recruits to become the foundation of the Iraqi correctional system.

This facility is the first of its kind, and this is the first class to be trained entirely by Iraqi instructors.

"This facility, from the ground up, has been designed to be the leading edge of the American withdrawal of forces from Iraq," said 2nd Lt. Christopher Cahak, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry's officer in charge of training. "It's an incredibly important mission, we take it very seriously and this mission has been handed to the Wisconsin National Guard."

Company A is responsible for the logistics of the academy and supervises training. The company is based in Menomonie, Wis., and is part of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team serving in Iraq.

"Our responsibility is to insure there is a conduit of information between the Iraqi Correctional Services and the actual instructors and staff here on site," Cahak said. "We also have a supervisory role with their instructors to insure they're teaching the material that is supposed to be trained in the order it is supposed to be taught."

Sgt. 1st Class David Wilson, the non-commissioned officer in charge of training at the facility compares their mission to that of a principal and vice principal at a school.

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“It’s hard to pinpoint a specific description of what we do because we cover so many little different aspects, whether it’s making sure they have uniforms, making sure they have water, making sure the maintenance and things are facilitated,” Wilson said.

The six-week Iraqi-led course consists of both classroom training and practical exercises. The course covers restraint procedures, defensive techniques, handcuffing, the use of weapons, director general orders, basic human rights, and the treatment of prisoners in theater internment facilities. After recruits finish the basic course they go on to an eight-day session taught by Wisconsin Guard soldiers. The advanced training focuses on the specifics of running the U.S.-controlled TIFs.

“This is probably the toughest thing the majority of these gentlemen have undergone in their lives,” Wilson said.

Soldiers of Company A take pride in their work at the academy, “It’s rewarding in that we can bring our Iraqi counterparts up to the correct standard to conduct prison and correctional officer operations on their own and hopefully facilitate the withdrawal of the American troops because they will be operating independently,” Wilson said.

Although language and cultural barriers sometimes cause problems, the Wisconsin Guard soldiers see improvements in recruits on a daily basis. “They have only been here a couple of weeks and are taking pride in what they do,” Wilson said.

The soldiers of Alpha Company will continue overseeing operations at the academy until they return to Wisconsin in early 2010.

“We hope that we can get this facility completely run by Iraq so that they can continue to train professional Iraqi correctional officers in our absence,” Cahak said.

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Photos

Thumbnails of 5 available photos

Note: High resolution photos can be downloaded from the Wisconsin National Guard Web site (<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/media.asp>) or email tim.donovan@us.army.mil.



CUTLINE: An instructor demonstrates unarmed self-defense tactics to a platoon of recruits. Hands-on lessons are half of the curriculum at the National Training Academy. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure.

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CUTLINE: Sgt. 1st Class David Wilson, the non-commissioned officer in charge of training (left) and 2nd Lt. Christopher Cahak, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry's officer in charge of training (center) go over a training schedule with one of the recruits. Company A is responsible for overseeing the training conducted at the Iraq correctional officer academy. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure.



CUTLINE: A recruit takes notes during a block of classroom instruction. Classroom topics include basic human rights and the treatment of prisoners in theater internment facilities. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure.



CUTLINE: Sgt. Nicholas Essick reviews the training schedule for the week. Even though all of the instruction at the academy is done by Iraqi instructors the Wisconsin Guardsmen oversee the curriculum. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure.



CUTLINE: Iraqi recruits stand in formation. Recruits are marched from classes to meals in order to instill the discipline needed to work in a theater internment facility. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tyler Lasure.